Tools for Bible Study\* 10/2022

Level I

1. Bibles – Having a number of translations can help bring out the shades of meaning in the original language and thus enhance understanding of the text. Parallel Bibles are convenient. Chronological Bibles give a chronological view of the biblical books and story. Study Bibles can give a lot of helpful information, and there are a variety of them. Topical Bibles list texts by topic.
2. Concordance – Lists words in the Bible and where in the Bible each word listed can be found. Exhaustive concordances do this for every word in the Bible and often have Greek and Hebrew dictionaries in the back and a way to tell what Greek or Hebrew word is in every reference.
3. Harmony of the Gospels – Not a singing group, but a book that sets the 4 Gospel accounts side by side.
4. Book on Hermeneutics – *Grasping God’s Word* (4th ed) by J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays is perhaps best. *How to Read the Bible for All It’s Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart is also excellent.

Level II

1. OT and NT Histories – Cover historical background relevant for the OT and NT respectively.
2. Bible Handbooks – Include general articles about the Bible and the world of the Bible. Typically, they also contain a brief commentary on the entire Bible
3. Bible Atlases – Contain information about the people, places, and events of the Bible with special attention to geography. They have maps, pictures of important sites, and helpful historical charts.
4. Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias and Handbooks – These give historical background and other information about the Bible. They can be very similar to Bible Handbooks, though Bible Encyclopedias tend to be more detailed and extensive and have multiple volumes.
5. OT and NT Introductions and Surveys – Contain detailed background information on each book of the Bible as well as an overview of the book’s contents.
6. Special Studies in Ancient Life and Culture – Provide detailed discussions on selected topics of historical and cultural background. Similar to Bible dictionaries, but more narrowly focused with much more detail on the selected topic(s).
7. Word Studies – Give the meaning of the Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic words of the biblical text. Can be found at various levels of complexity and detail.

Level III

1. Interlinear Bible – Original Greek or Hebrew with a literal translation underneath each word.
2. Commentaries – A. One volume commentaries on the whole Bible: Give book outlines and basic background and information and commentary on the whole Bible organized by the books of the Bible. B. Commentaries on individual books of the Bible. These come in differing levels of complexity, from popular/layman level commentaries without a lot of technical work to bog the reader down to scholarly commentaries including attention to the original languages and verse by verse exegesis. Commentaries bring all aspects of the interpretive process together to attempt to present the meaning of the specific text under study.
3. Background Commentaries -- Focus on explaining the historical-cultural background that is essential to grasping the meaning of specific biblical texts. Organized according to the biblical text like other commentaries.
4. Works on Bible Difficulties – These address alleged difficulties, problems, and contradictions in the Bible. Examples: *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, and *When Critics Ask*.

* Various tools and related functions listed above can be found online for free. See, for example, https://www.blueletterbible.org/.

\*Some of the information on this handout was taken from *Grasping God’s Word* by J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays and presentation slides connected to the book.